

VZCZCXYZ0005
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLG #0291/01 0890931
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 300931Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY LILONGWE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2575
INFO RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA SZ 0169

UNCLAS LILONGWE 000291

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STATE FOR S/GAC, AF/S
STATE PLEASE PASS HHS FOR STEIGER, HHS/CDC
USAID FOR GH/AA, GH/OA, GH/HIV-AIDS, AFR/SA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [KHIV](#) [MI](#)

SUBJECT: MALAWI NATIONAL HIV/AIDS REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS
COORDINATION AND DECENTRALIZATION

¶1. Summary: Malawi's National AIDS Commission has convened the first review of the national response to HIV and AIDS for the year 2005-06. The conference highlighted positive developments in coordination among all partners, as well as the decentralization of the HIV/AIDS response to the district levels. Challenges identified during the review included the need for greater engagement of key government ministries, and the lack of capacity among district assemblies to plan and implement the HIV/AIDS response. End summary.

¶2. On March 21 the Malawi National AIDS Commission convened the first six-month review of the national response to HIV and AIDS for the year 2005-06. The five day conference was the first full meeting of the Malawi HIV and AIDS Partnership Forum that was endorsed at the last review in September 2005. The Partnership Forum draws representation from all sectors: public institutions and organizations; the private sector; national and international non-governmental organizations; community and faith based organizations; development partners; and interest groups such women, young people and people living with HIV and AIDS.

¶3. The general objective of this review is to analyze achievements made in the six-month period from July to December 2005, and identify key challenges affecting implementation and outline action for improvement. The six-month review focused on decentralization of the HIV/AIDS response.

¶4. The Review will:

- Provide National AIDS Commission with an independent opinion on the progress that the Commission has made in coordinating implementation of its Integrated Annual Work Plan
- Provide the Commission with qualitative feedback on selected themes critical to achieving set national objectives
- Identify successful interventions and approaches that merit expansion and areas requiring remedial action.
- Provide critical data and information useful to adjusting and re-focusing the annual work plan
- Provide information, data and experiences that help assess implementation of the National HIV and AIDS Policy and HIV and AIDS Action Framework for Malawi.

Outcomes and action points from the review will be captured in an Aide Memoire that will be finalized by the Partnership

Forum and presented to the NAC Board.

¶5. This third review showed greater maturity and growth in both organization and content. Compared to previous ones, it was well organized and was attended by a representative spectrum of stakeholders. The commitments of both newly appointed Chairs of the NAC Board and the Partnership Forum, who stayed and actively participated throughout the review, were greatly appreciated.

¶6. There was, however, an under-representation of key ministries (health, education, gender and finance). The ministries are the major recipients of NAC funding and have had perennial implementation problems that negatively impact on all other implementers. The level and active participation of these ministries should be given higher priority in the next review, including the opportunity to present progress of their own programs in plenary.

¶7. The presence of the District Commissioners added great value to the discussions on decentralization of the response, especially the practical challenges of transitioning of responsibilities from Umbrella Organizations to District Assemblies. There was an open environment for exchange of views and inclusion of NGOs, CBOs and private sector representation. A main issue of the review was limited capacity of the DAs to plan for and implement AIDS response. A major issue was DA capacity to act as grants management facility for Global Fund and other development partner funds in funding community level activities, a critical aspect of the response. The development of this capacity over the next two years was the main concern of the review.

¶8. The Aide Memoire for the HIV and AIDS response review will be released in early April, coordinated with the release of

the Aide Memoire from a scheduled Health Sector six-monthly review.

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